Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies among Thai EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among Thai EFL Undergraduate Students. Through the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), the students' metacognitive awareness of Global, Problem-Solving, and Support reading strategies used were also identified. At the end of the study, the results indicated that the participants usually have metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. They mostly used problem-solving strategies, while the supporting strategies was leastly used in their reading.

Keywords: Metacognitive Awareness, Reading Strategies, EFL, English, Reading

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill for anyone studying English as a second language. In order to gain the required knowledge for career qualifications, learners must read and improve their understanding and use of English. The understanding and acquisition of information in English is dependent on the methods used. Students use various methods to help them attain, memorise, and recover information. Since English is a core subject in the national curriculum, students studying at the university level must be able to read English texts; often, there is a significant amount of content in paragraphs, passages, and basic articles, and it is expected that students are able to read and understand this content. Thus, the ability to handle various kinds of texts is essential for students. Reading is likely to play a larger role in learning English as time goes on, particularly with respect to university and graduate education, and for anyone intending to pursue a career in the science and technology fields.

Since the 1970s, studies in this field have concentrated on understanding the best way to educate English learners to use different strategies in order to improve their reading skills. Readers' approaches are the focus of the present study of foreign language reading. Reading approaches involve the methods, activities, problem-solving strategies, and study habits that make learning more useful and proficient (Oxford & Crookall, 1988). Reading strategies are interesting because they tell us about how readers cope with and interact with written text, and how they use strategies to understand a text (Rigney, 1978). Second-language reading research indicates that the reading techniques utilised reflect how the reader thinks of an assignment, how they perceive what they are hearing, and what they do while reading (Singhal, 2001).

Reading involves decoding, interpreting, recognising, expressing, voicing, understanding, and answering (Nuttall, 1996). Cognitive ability and metacognition involve the use of cognitive and metacognitive methods to improve productivity as readers try to achieve desirable results. The mental processes used to gain, change, store, recover, and use skills involve cognition. Cognition also involves thought processes or the intelligence faculty, including consciousness, understanding, and thought, as well as vocabulary, memory, and judgment (Brown & Baker, 1983, as cited in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1983). Comprehension in literacy requires a reader to combine prior knowledge, language skills, and other metacognitive techniques (Garner, 1987). This requires much more than just knowing sentences, phrases, and words. Metacognitive approaches concern familiarity with learning (metacognitive intelligence) as well as management over learning (metacognitive approaches or capabilities).

Metacognitive approaches include exercises that readers perform to prepare, forecast results, and track, monitor, and assess their understanding (Block, 1992). Vacca and Vacca (1999) reported that metacognition includes the capacity to consider and manage personal learning. To enable understanding and knowledge, readers must use different methods. They must consider the reading assignment and think about what they know or do not know about the reading material. Finally, they must prepare to complete the reading effectively while continuously reviewing and checking their efforts in carrying out the tasks (Vacca & Vacca, 1999). This researcher anticipates that this current study can assist learners and teachers to be mindful of students' reading methods and difficulties, to recognise each learner's reading strengths and limitations, and to offer learners advice about how to read better.

Purpose of the study

This study is to investigate the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies of undergraduate students, and to identify the categories of students' metacognitive reading strategies such as: Global Reading Strategies, Problem Solving Reading Strategies and Support Reading Strategies.

Theory of Metacognitive Awareness

In the 1970s, the metacognitive theory began to surface. The early work of John Flavell helped to shape the idea, which provided momentum for further research (Hacker, 1998). When readers have metacognitive understanding, the monitoring system is more successful (Anderson, 1994). Better readers who are more knowledgeable will be aware of what is good reading and what causes reading challenges. They will also know what literacy techniques are usable, how they work, when they should be implemented, and why they help in forming understanding.

Research indicates that successful readers who are cognitively conscious are actively monitoring to ensure that new information is matched with what has already been learned (Anderson, 1994). This screening mechanism and sense-forming process usually occur unintentionally until the reader finds problems in comprehension. If this occurs, readers tend to decelerate and enter a thoughtful, structured state that includes a range of active processing approaches.

According to Goodman (1967, 1977), reading is a psycholinguistic game of presumption. Readers will choose the latest, most useful signs to make guesses when facing a failure in understanding or when confronting unknown words. A reader will try to convey or link new information with the plan that has already been made by the reader as these deductions are made (Anderson, 1994). In order to do this well, the reader must be cognisant of which knowledge features are applicable. Readers will not efficiently link new information with old information and will not understand the text if they are not mindful of what they know in a metacognitive way. More metacognitive awareness can facilitate understanding at this stage of monitoring.

The expansion of an internal monitoring system is similarly essential (Almasi, 1995). Metacognition enables self-controlled reading. Further, readers with metacognitive awareness have more effective monitoring systems (Anderson, 1994). Strong readers who are metacognitively aware when monitoring comprehension will test to ensure that new information revealed while reading is congruent with the information that

they previously had (Anderson, 1994). A reader will either refuse the new information or adjust the old if the new information is not coherent with what is supposed (Anderson, 1994). Amending a reader's understanding becomes problematic and reading comprehension can suffer when the reader does not have metacognitive mindfulness of the reading process and cannot adjust their own conception or understanding (Almasi, 1995).

Several thinking and reflective processes are related in metacognition. Metacognition is vital for reading comprehension. Anderson (1994) reviewed the five main elements as follows. (a) Arranging and forecasting learning. In the pre-reading step, metacognition is used to deliberately focus on the use of previous knowledge as a framework for forecasting and knowing what to learn. Metacognition guides cognitive function to understand the intent of reading and to choose successful strategies for reading. (b) Choosing and adapting learning techniques. The metacognitive techniques of students influence the tracking of reading skills during the reading process, creating mental notes and pictures of important information, asking and trying to answer questions, revising forecasts, evaluating task attitudes, and making changes to improve understanding. (c) Monitoring strategy use. Metacognition activates thought on the reading material during the post-reading phase and involves memory of important ideas and points to condense the text. When thought recognises gaps in understanding, suitable approaches can be utilised. (d) Arranging different approaches. Students need the skills to match, organise, and make connections among the many strategies available in order to avoid failure when straining in reading. (e) Assessing method use and learning. Reading is a direct development, but also a rather recurrent activity. Regardless of whether reading approaches are successful, it is imperative to inspire readers to reflect. This allows readers to build their reading freedom based on individual experience. It also enables agile and comfortable problem solving and fosters self-efficiency and confidence.

Metacognition is vital for reading as it concerns scheduling learning, choosing and using a wide array of methods, and arranging different approaches so as to explain reading issues. Readers who know about metacognitive approaches while reading can use adaptable problem-solving and understand the text better.

Several factors influence successful reading. The more we know about these factors, the better we can master reading tasks competently. In summary, it is very useful to consider certain reading ideas, methods, mechanisms, and perceptual and metacognitive reading techniques when reading. Such models help readers to gain new insight into how reading works and allows them to assess what mechanisms are

more successful and how approaches can be tracked, tested, and self-regulated to foster effective reading. Further, understanding of metacognition problems and weaknesses allows teachers to select acceptable pedagogical templates for reading practice, thereby enhancing the quality of language education.

Methodology

Participants

Participants are undergraduate students enrolled in the first semester of the 2019 academic year. The total participants were 309, 90 males and 219 females.

Instrument

A published instrument, called the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), was used in this study. The SORS was used in this study to evaluate the metacognitive understanding and perceived use of reading approaches by adolescent and adult EFL students while reading educational materials, including textbooks. The instrument was modified by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) for use in elementary, college, and university classes with an EFL demographic. This measure has been field-tested and has shown dependability and legitimacy as a measure of students' metacognition and reading approaches. Initially used by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) for measuring native English-speaking students' understanding and apparent use of reading strategies while reading academic or school-related materials, it was established based on the Metacognitive-Awareness-of-Reading-Strategies Inventory (MARSI). The measure was validated among a large native-speaker population of students with middle school to college-range reading abilities.

The SORS comprises 30 items, each measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. To specify how often they use the reading strategy indicated in the statement, students must read each statement and mark the appropriate number box. A higher number means that the related approach is used more regularly.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher gave potential participants detailed information about the survey and study, including a description of the research goals, before handing out the survey. Verbal agreement for participation was obtained from each respondent. Following this, the questionnaire was distributed. Completion of the questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes; although, there was no time limit imposed and some

respondents actually took longer to complete it. Completed questionnaires were used to form the data for this research. In order to analyse the levels of metacognitive understanding of reading approaches among undergraduate students, narrative statistical analyses were performed. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated.

Result

To investigate the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies of undergraduate students, the overall mean score of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies of undergraduate students

Factor	N	M	SD
Problem Solving	309	4.05	.39
Support Reading	309	3.61	.50
Global Reading	309	3.76	.37
Overall	309	3.79	.33

From Table 1, Thai EFL undergraduate students had a high level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies with a mean score of 3.79 (SD = .33). Further, the students had a high level of metacognitive awareness for three reading strategies: the problem solving, support reading, and global reading, with mean scores of 4.05 (SD = .39), 3.61 (SD = .50), and 3.76 (SD = .37), respectively.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the metacognitive awareness of Thai EFL undergraduate students with regard to reading strategies. The study sample comprised 309 Thai EFL undergraduate students who voluntarily performed a reading strategies survey. The results showed that participants regularly adopted reading approaches. Although the support reading approaches were the least commonly used in reading, students frequently used and were conscious of global reading and problem-solving reading approaches. The findings of this study offer various suggestions for teachers and professors of foreign languages.

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